

Physicians News - February 3, 2009
By Congressman John Adler (NJ-03)
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America's health care system is broken. This year, the total of all health care spending will reach \$2.3 trillion, which equals more than \$7,500 per American. The system is strained to its limits, and unless bold action is taken, health care costs will continue to increase, while middle class families' access to quality health care declines.

We need to ensure that our country continues the tradition of keeping the best and brightest individuals in the field of medicine. Too many doctors are leaving the health care field because of low reimbursement rates and high medical malpractice costs.

I strongly support repealing the Sustainable Growth Formula (SGR), which inadequately reimburses doctors for Medicare services. Under this formula, doctors will receive a 15% reduction in payments in 2010 if Congress does not take action to stop the cuts. I will be a strong advocate for reversing these cuts, increasing reimbursement rates for doctors and replacing the current payment formula.

We also need to make sure that doctors, and not health insurance companies, make the decisions about a patient's health. Cutting back on red tape and providing doctors with the flexibility they need to sufficiently serve their patients is a key principal to health care reform.

Finally, I support loan forgiveness for physicians that choose to serve in a medically-underserved area or practice in areas where there are physician shortages.

Fixing the health care crisis is a key piece to getting America's economy back on track. Higher copayments, premiums and deductibles are making health care unaffordable for middle class families. Soaring insurance costs leave less money for households to spend on family priorities, and in this tough economy, many will be forced to delay care in order to save money.

Furthermore, small businesses are unable to offer health insurance when the average premium for small group health insurance plans can cost \$10,000 or more for family coverage. Once we reduce health care costs, businesses will be able to keep their employees healthier, hire more workers and increase productivity.

With 47 million American residents uninsured, we need to find a way to provide quality, affordable health care to every citizen. I support providing tax credits to working class families that purchase health insurance in the private market.

In addition, I have already fulfilled my campaign promise to vote to expand the successful State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which provides affordable health care coverage

to children in low to middle-income families. The legislation would cover approximately four million additional children, bringing the total number of children enrolled in SCHIP to 11 million. The bill is expected to be one of the first bills that President Obama signs into law, and it sends a signal that health care reform will be a high priority over for Congress and the Administration over the next two years.

Another priority that I will work on over the next few years is increasing Health IT usage. Our current health care system is disjointed, and we need to find a way to eliminate inefficiencies in the system. The federal government must partner with hospitals, physicians and clinics to implement new technologies that will not only save lives, but also save taxpayers money. Every year, more than 1.5 million preventable, adverse drug events occur, and a recent RAND study indicated that the federal government could save \$77 billion a year if electronic medical records were used. Together, we can bring our health care system into the 21st century, which will improve quality of care and reduce costs for everyone.

Our health care system needs more than a band-aid, it needs significant changes. Congress must work with the new Administration and physicians to craft legislation to lower health care costs for employers and families, close the gap in coverage for uninsured or underinsured households, and improve the quality of care for everyone. I look forward to listening to the physicians in Southern New Jersey and advocating for your priorities.